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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: KIRKUK: MUNICIPAL COUNCILS IN SUB-DISTRICTS
VIRTUALLY POWERLESS

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Municipal council chairmen for five Kirkuk sub-districts expressed frustration July 20 over the lack of infrastructure in their towns. They asserted that without leverage over budgets, municipal councils cannot provide public services to their communities. Although municipal councils meet, their credibility with the public has declined. If they are to remain relevant, district councils in places like Kirkuk must learn to channel local views through effective lobbying with other officials, such as provincial council members, TNA members and ministers. END SUMMARY.

Councils Unable to Meet Basic Needs

2. (SBU) Municipal council chairmen from five of the six Kirkuk sub-districts met with REO Kirkuk PolOffs on July 20 in a REO initiative to improve communication with local governments. Attendees included: Hassan Abid Al-Juburi, Multaqa district; Dashti Abdul-Majeed Haseeb, Laylan; Maad Sami Al-Assi (deputy chairman), Taza; Rizgar Papilani, Shwan; and Luqman Aziz, Qarahanjeer. (NOTE: Shwan, Qarahanjeer, and Qadir Karam districts receive their funding from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), yet fall into Kirkuk sub-district jurisdiction. END NOTE.) The councilmen described their frustration at not being able to meet even the most basic constituent needs. Inadequate supplies of water and electricity topped their list of concerns. Laylan Council Chairman Abdul-Majeed Haseeb noted growing resentment regarding the perceived insignificance of reconstruction projects in his town. He said the public expects projects that will add noticeable value to the ordinary citizen's life. He noted that, without sufficient clean water and dependable electricity, it is impossible for municipal councils to focus on governance issues.

No Budget and Unresponsive Provincial Government

3. (SBU) The chairmen claimed that their councils do not receive a budget through the national budgeting process, have no allocation for spending, and council members do not receive salaries. The chairmen described their council buildings as dismal and poorly furnished. They worry about security and the lack of resources to protect themselves, their families and the council meeting places.

4. (SBU) They unanimously voiced dissatisfaction with the Kirkuk Governor and Provincial Council in dealing with their concerns. Shwan Council Chairman Rizgar Papilani said the sub-districts are forgotten in Kirkuk government's higher echelons. The chairmen complained that their requests for meetings with the Governor were refused and all agreed that they have no interaction with the Kirkuk Provincial Council. In fact, Papilani said he requested meetings on three separate occasions with the previous Kirkuk Provincial Council Chairman, but was refused each time. However, he noted that he has not recently requested a meeting with current chairman, Rizgar Ali Hamajan (PUK).

Losing Credibility at Home

5. (SBU) There has been project work in Kirkuk (Tamin) province - some USD 18 million in IRRF-financed projects have been completed, with another USD 261 million in projects underway, and up to USD 141 million more planned. This funding does not go through the district councils, however. Powerless to undertake work independently without a budget, the local council chairmen said they continue to hold meetings on a regular basis. However, all agreed that it is increasingly difficult to maintain the respect of their communities while faced with repeated failures to produce visible public service results in a constituency that views deliver projects as

equivalent to power. The two Arab and three Kurdish chairmen at the meeting were united in their concerns and all frustrated, regardless of ethnicity - a rare sign of unity in Kirkuk. If they are to remain relevant in the current structure, district councils in places like Kirkuk must learn to channel local views through effective lobbying with other officials, such as provincial council members, TNA members and ministers.

16. (U) Embassy Baghdad, REO Mosul, and REO Basrah minimize considered.